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AUTHOR Rivera, Manuel G.
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ABSTRACT

The life of Benito Juarez--who broke all odds to achieve academically, politically, and socially--serves proof that Hispanics can achieve without sacrificing their cultural heritage. The current educational achievement of Hispanics in California and elsewhere in the nation is a matter for serious consideration. Nearly 50% of all Hispanics enrolled in high schools will not graduate. Of those who graduated in 1983, fewer than 5% were eligible to enroll in the University of California, and less than 15% were eligible for the California State University. National statistics (1982) showed that of the Hispanic population that graduated from high school, 22% entered college, 7% completed college, 4% entered graduate or professional school, and 2% completed professional and graduate school. The relationship between income and educational status is well established, but it should be noted that in California ethnic minorities earn disproportionately low incomes even with the same amount of education. A longitudinal study conducted by the Department of Education shows the lasting, adverse consequences for those who earn grades of less than "C" or who leave school without graduating. On the occasion of the Cinco de Mayo celebration, Hispanics should commit themselves to the partnership of cultural survival and academic achievement. (JHZ)

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HISPANIC CULTURAL SURVIVAL AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

A PARTNERSHIP THAT WORKS

by
Manuel G. Rivera, Ph.D.
President, San Bernardino Valley College
San Bernardino, California

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Cinco de Mayo Celebration: Keynote Address
Hispanic Scholarship Awards Banquet/Dance
California State University, San Bernardino
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HISPANIC CULTURAL SURVIVAL AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

A PARTNERSHIP THAT WORKS

I wish to thank you for the opportunity of speaking to such a special group. As one of the very few who has achieved academically, you are indeed special. Why are you special? Let me give you a brief overview of the educational achievement of Hispanics and then move back to the preservation of culture and academic achievement---a partnership that works.

Nearly 50% of all Hispanics enrolled in high schools will not graduate and of those who graduated in 1983, fewer than 5% of these graduates were eligible to enroll in the University of California and less #than 15% were eligible for the California State University. [Expanding Educational Equity in California Schools and Colleges, California Postsecondary Education Commission, 1986] We have identified critical years for the Hispanic student as the third grade and the ninth grade. These two years appear to take a dramatic toll on the Hispanic. The third year appears to set the mind of the Hispanic towards school while the ninth grade appears to be the grade in which students physically leave school.

You will most likely find that statistics quoted vary. As I cite statistics, please note that each statistic is derived by different agency, refers to a particular year, region-- State, national, or city. Until very recently we [Hispanics] were not part of the U.S. Census reporting system. A sample was taken of our population and inferences were made to the general population. This lack of presence has created research problems in comparison of years and populations and undercounting. Now we are at least able to have a handle on the status of the population when statistics are released. Terminology is also quite a problem . The term "Hispanic" has evolved over the years. You no doubt have heard or read the following terms:

Mexican

Mexican American

Mexican of American Descent

American of Mexican Descent

Latin American

Latino

Chicano

Spanish Speaking

Spanish Origin

Hispanic

Manitos

In Texas, the Hispanic population is mostly of Mexican origin. If you were to go to Florida, the Hispanic population would be of Cuban Origin, in New York, Puerto Rican origin, and so on. The term applied to the population of Mexican origin has evolved over the years. Who knows what the term will be in the year 2000. Why the constant change? Why the designation of Hispanic Day in September? There is no time to explore that issue here.

Eligibility to enroll at the University of California [9 campuses] or the California State University [19 campuses] and enrollment are two different things. Participation of high school graduates in higher education in San Bernardino County is next to the lowest in the State of California, i.e., Kern County is the lowest followed by San Bernardino. While the percentage of high school graduates in California has increased from 1975 to 1982 for Hispanics and Blacks the percentage of those graduates entering college has decreased. Hispanics increased the percentage of high school graduates by 39% and declined in entering college by 16% while Blacks increased 29% and declined 11%. Statistics point to a greater percentage of decline for Hispanics. (California: The State and Its Educational System, Hodgkinson, 1986, p.7).

Why is it that Hispanic high school graduates do not attend College? Could it be the "hidden curriculum" of the school that does not promote higher education in this population? "Something is going on outthere," wrote a researcher in a paper describing low achievement of students in the schools.

Of those who enroll in Colleges in Universities, only very few complete a bachelor's program. Astin [1982] has referred to this "trickling down" of numbers from the composition of the K-12 levels to the completion of doctorates by minority students as the "pipeline" i.e., leaking pipeline. National statistics by Astin [1982] showed that from the 55% Chicano population that graduates from high school, 22% enter college, 7% complete college, 4% enter graduate or professional school, and 2% complete professional and graduate school.

Estimates by the California Postsecondary Commission in Background for Expanding Educational Equity, [March 1986] estimated the number of students in the educational pipeline by looking at what would happen to 1,000 of the ninth graders; I converted the number to percentages. The figures confirm Astin's and Hodgkinson 's figures. Of the 1979-80 ninth graders and the 1982-83 high school graduates the following was estimated:

	Percentages	
	Hispanic	Black
Graduate from High School	66	67
Enroll in a Community College as a Freshman	20	26
Enroll at California State University	3.6	4.5
Enroll at the University of California	2.0	2.5
Graduate from CSU-5 years	.9	.6
Graduate from UC-5 years	.8	1.0

Education and income are related, i.e., the more schooling one has the more likelihood that the person will earn more and stay in the work place.

In Background for Expanding Educational Equity, [March 1986] it was reported that as of 1980, three times as many high school-age youth in California from families earning under $10,000 a year were not attending school as were those from families earning $50,000 or more. Among college-age youth aged 18-24, only a fourth of those from families making between $5,000 and $20,000 annually were continuing their education compared with over half of those from families earning $50,000 and above.

The relationship between income and school attendance was illustrated by the California Postsecondary Commission's report Background for Expanding Educational Equity [March 1986]. The report stated that according to the 1980 Census, the percentage of 14-17 year olds not attending school in Spring 1980 varied greatly across ethnic and family income. The rate of youth not attending school in the Spring 1980 was highest for all income categories in the Hispanic group:

	Hispanic	Black	White	Asian
Less than 5,000	13.5%	4.1	8.9	6.7
5000-9999	13.6	4.9	8.6	5.5
10000-14999	12.2	5.0	8.2	3.1
15000-19999	11.1	3.9	6.8	3.4
20000-24999	10.1	3.7	5.3	3.3
25000-34999	8.1	3.8	4.2	2.7
35000-49999	8.0	3.6	3.3	2.3
50000-more than	6.4	1.6	2.6	2.3
All income levels	10.6	4.2	5.1	3.3

Education status is more significant than ethnic background or class background in predicting a youth's prospects," a recent researcher concluded in a major policy analysis. In fact, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights isolated 2/5 of the reason for the Black increase in weekly wages of an average 300% in a 40

year period to education. Whites had an increase of 163% in the same time period. (Los Angeles Times, September 8, 1986) No statistic was provided for Hispanics.

However, in Background for Expanding Educational Equity, [March 1986] it was reported that California's ethnic minorities earn disproportionately low incomes even with the same amount of education; therefore, the ability of these families to help their children is limited, if not impossible:

Hispanic Men Median Income

Level of Education	(Median Income $13,423)		
	Less than 12000	12000 to 14999	15000 and Above
Four Years of High school	57.2%	11.2%	31.6%
Some College Attendance	48.1	11.2	40.7
Four Years of College	36.4	11.3	52.3
Graduate Study	34.4	8.7	56.9

Percentages based on all men

Women percentages based on women who reported income

Hispanic Women Median Income

Level of Education	(Median Income $6320)		
	Less than 6000	6000 to 7999	8000 and Above
Four Years of High school	47.8%	13.7%	38.5%
Some College Attendance	42.8	12.2	45.0
Four Years of College	33.7	10.2	56.1
Graduate Study	29.1	8.1	62.8

The attainment of educational achievement is only the first step towards achieving the status that the non-minority population has accomplished. Hispanic males as showed above, earn less than Whites even with graduate degrees as evidenced by the discrepancy between the percentages of the total population differences:

American Indian	23.5% from Whites in $15000 and above category
Asian	10.6%
Blacks	12.2%
Hispanics	22.3%

The argument of the importance of high school graduation and grades is convincing when we look at the statistics of a study of what happens to students after four years from graduating from high school. There are adverse conditions---irreversible for many- for those who earn grades of C- or who leave school without graduating. Let me cite a federal longitudinal study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, HIGH SCHOOL AND BEYOND:

1. More than half of the black and Hispanic high school 10th graders in 1980 has dropped out of school 4 years after or graduated with a grade "C" or less. The grade of "C" or less is# called youth "at risk" by the researchers.

   This is a longitudinal study of 12,199 students first questioned in 1970. Students are followed up in 1982 and in 1984.

2. Poverty and limited adult opportunity rise sharply as one moves from high school graduates with a "C" plus average or higher to at risk students to nongraduate."

3. Drop outs and students at risk look for work at greater percentages than graduates:

   8% Graduates
   17% At risk
   25% Drop outs

4. Drop outs and children at risk have children at a greater percentage than graduate:

   10% Graduates
   21% At risk
   58% Drop outs

   Hispanic females cited pregnancy as the reason for leaving school in 25% of the cases.

5. For every nine females on welfare who are drop outs there is one on welfare graduate.

6. The White population outnumbered the minority population--poverty and early parenthood

   Disproportion of the minorities in at the risk and graduate and drop out categories

[Crawford and Viadero, Education Week, November 5, 1986]

There are other significant findings of the HIGH SCHOOL and BEYOND study that need mentioning:

1. The class of 1980 has become somewhat less interested in climbing the ladder of success and more concerned with family matters.

2. Many achievement oriented clauses slipped in the ratings since the student's graduation. The value of success decreased from 86% to 80% in four years.

   The value of having money also declined from 30% to 25%.

3. In both 1980 and 1984 only 13% of the graduates said correcting social and economic inequalities was very important; contrast that to 27% in 1972. Graduates were still in college compared with 37% of the public school graduated.

4. Technology and the acquisition of computer knowledge and skill in operating the computers themselves is becoming another basic skill. There is research to indicate a distorted exposure to computers:

   The students who did not attend college reported being exposed to computers at only half the rate of students and were the least likely to have had experience on any device.

The High School and Beyond longitudinal study points to the importance of high school graduation but at more that "C" and the permanent scar of poverty and lack of access to our society.

Public Colleges and Universities are not providing professional education in California. Most of the degrees are given by private institutions. Enrollment of minority students in these institutions is even less than the public colleges and universities. Most bachelors degrees are awarded by the California State University, masters and professional degrees are by independent colleges and universities, and most doctorates by the University of California. The following statistics are provided in "A General Diffusion of Knowledge..." Benefits to California and its Economy from its Colleges and Universities, California Postsecondary Commission, [Undated]:

Bachelors Degrees

The California State University	51.3%
University of California	24.1
Independent Schools and Colleges	24.6

Masters

The California State University	31.3%
University of California	18.3
Independent Schools and Colleges	50.4

Doctorates

University of California	52.6%
Independent Schools and Colleges	47.4

Professional Degrees

University of California	21.8%
Independent Schools and Colleges	78.2

Public institutions; therefore, are not providing the education of the 8,152 professionals. This has great repercussions for the type of professional that California produces and access to these professional schools by underrepresented groups.

Researchers, professors, public officials, and local residents ponder and offer solutions to solve the Hispanic "problem." However, few look at the issue of cultural determination and preservation as one of the reasons for "dropping out of school." I strongly believe that we do not have to drop out of school to survive culturally. We can be what we are and achieve academically. Like Pedro Infante said in one of his songs "YO SOY QUIEN SOY Y NO ME PAREZCO A NADIE" or "YO SOY YO Y MIS CIRCUNSTANCIAS."

The devastating statistics on educational achievement is related to the group's decision of cultural survival. I believe that the price that we are paying for maintaining our cultural background is indeed a high price. I propose to you tonight, that we can achieve and keep our cultural heritage.

In fact, many of us from the 1960's feel that there is a generation that followed us that somehow has been lost. Those who attend school are not aware of our cultural roots, the rich historical background, and the contributions of Chicano Studies to an understanding of our ourselves, our culture, and our struggle to be "como soy sin parecerme a nadie." [be one of a kind without resembling--being a clone? of anyone]. We are sort of back where we started in the 1960's, i.e., a need to bring into focus our cultural roots and background.

We, Hispanics, chose Cinco de mayo as our celebration because it provides us with symbols that relate to us. You should know that the Mexican People do not celebrate Cinco de mayo with the same vigor as we do, they celebrate the Anniversary of the Revolution of 1910 on the 20th of November each year. Why the Cinco de Mayo, then?

First

A Zapotec full blooded Indian becomes a symbol that no matter what the Indian content of the Chicano, s/he has the ability---genetic ability to become an attorney, Senator, Congressman, and President. The genetic reference is intended to be mentioned and I do not want to gloss over it. It is during this time in the Mexican history that there was still the belief that those who were not Europeans did not quite have the "brains" to succeed academically, politically, or socially. Benito Juarez

broke all odds and achieved academically, politically, and socially; therefore, we strongly believe that no matter what your background is--Indian--Spanish--Anglo-- we have the intellectual capacity to succeed. You no doubt have read the portrayal of the Indio in Mexican literature. Haven't you?

Second

A monarchy was established in Mexico by the Mexican themselves who did not believe that the country could run itself without an European that was "superior" to the Native. There were those who believed that only Europeans could run the country because after all, who could trust those mestizos, creollos, and those born in Mexico. Juarez represents the belief that a democracy is the best system to achieve equality and to allow the participation of all the members of society, not only the selected few. The Constitution of 1857 was a major change from the 1821 Mexican Independence ideals. Early in the Chicano movement------there is some disagreement about when it started, some believe it started in 1848 immediately after the ink was placed on the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, and there are those who believe it started during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's, I leave it up to you to decide after careful reading when the movement began...-----Emiliano Zapata was used as a symbol to represent el campesino, Zapata's ideals of land reform, but leaders soon found out that the Chicano has not gone through the Revolution of 1910 yet.

Third

El respeto al derecho ajeno es la paz. Juarez believed in the sovereignty of the Mexican people. He did not believe that intervention from a foreign country was in the best interest of the country. He believed in the autonomy of the country to take care of its problems. Hispanics need to develop their own solutions. They need to become intimately responsible for the solutions to their problems-issues. Hispanics need to succeed and fail in the process. It is the only way of developing leadership in the community itself.

Fourth

Juarez and General Zaragoza were able to defeat the French troops although the latter were better equipped than those of Zaragoza who were made of mostly Pueblan Indians. Hispanics can succeed regardless of poverty and social condition. Once there is a belief in succeeding academically, we can succeed.

Fifth

Juarez believed that the institution of the Church was not serving the needs of the people; therefore, he passed the Ley Juarez and Ley Lerdo which put him in direct conflict with one of the most powerful institutions of Mexico----Catholic Church, if not the most powerful. Hispanics can and do question the institutions that do not serve them.

This is why, briefly, why we celebrate Cinco de mayo and why you are so important to all of us. We need you and wish you success in your academic goals. We want you to become the next President of California State University [any 19 campus] the next President of the University of California [any 9 campus] the next President of a Community College [any 105], the next physician, the next attorney, the next teacher, the next city councilmen.

We also want you, the Hispanic to be proud of whom you are:

You are part of the Mayas--those great astronomers who built the cities of Uxmal, Tulum, Coba,

You are part of the Aztecs who build the pyramids of Tehotihuacan

You are part of Juan Junipero Serra who settled California early in the 18th Century

You are part of Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, Morelos, Juarez, Zaragoza, Zapata, Villa, Francisco I Madero

You are Thomas Rivera, Rodolfo Anaya, Sylvia Chavez, Gloria Molina, Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz,

You are me. We are all Hispanics. Thank you.

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